FAIRY GRAMMAR

J. Harold Carpenter

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BY

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PREFACE

SOME years' experience in teaching children the first elements of English Grammar has enabled me to sympathise not only with the children in their endeavours to grasp a difficult subject, but also with the teachers whose duty it is to help them to master their difficulties. To the young mind, a lesson in grammar affords but little interest; to the teacher, the subject is too often devoid of everything which can assist in making a lesson enjoyable to the pupil; and, unless he or she is blessed with a gift of humour and imagination above the ordinary, the lessons in grammar develop into something closely akin to drudgery for both pupil and teacher. A child can be taught anything with the aid of its imagination; and, although at first sight it might seem impossible to connect a lesson in grammar with the imagination of a child, yet I confidently

believe that this little book will effect that mysterious combination.

There is no new method of teaching, no newfangled device involved in this book. It is merely a tale by means of which the child's imagination is brought to bear upon a difficult and uninteresting subject (from the child's point of view), and which, I believe, will enable the young mind to grasp the importance of grammar, and all unconsciously to learn its first mysteries. Certainly, the lessons are not carried very far; but experience has shown me that, when once a child has firmly grasped the difference between the parts of speech, no difficulty is experienced in erecting the rest of the edifice. And I believe in making a child's first efforts as easy and as pleasant as possible.

The book will serve more purposes than one. It may be used as a reader at school, from which many exercises in grammar may be taken that will prove interesting to the young class; or it may be used simply as a tale, and the child be left to amuse itself and to learn as it reads. Nor do I think that the adult reader will find it unamusing; and I am confident that any parent or teacher who scans these pages will at once grasp

the advantages which the book offers of teaching the child in such a way that pleasure becomes mutual. And thus I sincerely hope that this little book will indeed prove to be a Fairy Grammar.

My thanks are due to Mr. A. Watson Bain for the definitions in the Appendix.

J. H. C.

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ALL THE BOYS

I MET AND TAUGHT

AT

BELSIZE SCHOOL

FAIRY GRAMMAR

CHAPTER I

THE COMING OF RAM-MARG

JOHN HENRY ARTHUR PERCIVAL SPARKS was eight years old, all but a few hours. That is to say, by the time the sun had risen and daylight had come again it would be his birthday. At the time this story begins he was in bed, and he was also in a very bad temper. That is why he was in bed ; for he would not have been there had he been in a good temper, in which case this story might never have been written.

You have very likely laughed because John Henry Arthur Percival Sparks had so many names to be called by. But that was not his fault ; and if you want to know why he had so many names, you must ask his father or mother, or some of his uncles and aunts, for I am afraid I cannot tell you. At any rate, it was no fault of his—of that you may be sure. But it was his fault that he was in a bad

temper, and therefore it was his fault that he was in bed. And it was also his fault that this story ever had a beginning.

Of course, Master J. H. A. P. Sparks would not agree with me in all this. He would say that it was his mother's fault that he was in bed before his time. She had sent him there. After all, he had not done anything very wrong. He had certainly been naughty at his lessons all day, but that was not the reason he had to go to bed early. He had been punished because he had very much wanted to open one or two brown-paper parcels in the dining-room, nice brown-paper parcels all tied up with string, reminding him that to-morrow was his birthday. And, though he had been told three times not to touch them, he had at last succeeded in poking a hole in one of them. And then a lot of horrid white powder stuff had fallen out and made a mess all over the dining-room carpet, when all the while he had thought that that parcel was for him! That was why he was in bed; not for making the mess all over the carpet, but because he had not obeyed his mother and left the parcel alone.

It had been a very bad day for J. H. A. P. Sparks, bad from the time he had got up to the

time he had been put to bed again. His governess, Miss Walker, said that she had never known him so naughty ; and he had spent most of the morning standing in the corner of the school-room, because he would not try to learn the lesson in Grammar which she was teaching him. The more she punished him, the worse he became ; until his last act of disobedience sent him where he should have been a long while ago—to bed.

And there he lay in the dark, sometimes angry, sometimes sulky, and all the time very unhappy. And he was a little frightened, too, because to-morrow would be his birthday ; and he had been so tiresome that they might punish him by not giving him his presents. That would really be too bad !

He was thinking about those presents more and more, and feeling very sorry for himself, when all of a sudden he heard a squeaky little voice calling him by name.

"John Henry Arthur Percival Sparks," squeaked the voice somewhere at the foot of his bed.

"What's that !" asked John.

"John Henry Arthur Percival Sparks," said the voice again.

"Who are you ?" asked John, a little frightened.

"Never mind who I am," said the voice, which sounded just like the squeak a pencil will sometimes make in writing on a slate. "I want to talk to you."

"Where are you?" asked John.

"Never mind where I am," answered the squeak. "Just listen to me!"

"What do you want?"

"I have already told you. I want to talk to you. Why do you not learn your lessons?"

"I hate them!" said John.

"How many parts of speech are there?"

"I don't know, and I don't care!" replied John.

"Then I am going to teach you," said the voice.

"You can't," said John. "Nobody can."

"He-he!" squeaked the voice. "John Henry Arthur Percival Sparks, you are a fool."

"I don't care!" said John.

"What is a noun?" asked the voice.

"I don't know," answered John.

"Then I shall teach you," said the voice. "What is a pronoun?"

"I don't know."

"Then I shall teach you that. What is an adjective?"

"I don't know," answered John. "So shut up, and don't ask me any more silly questions!"

"Very well," said the voice. "Now listen to me. To-morrow I shall teach you what a noun is, and the next day I shall teach you what a pronoun is, and the next day you shall learn what an adjective is; so that, in a week from to-day, you will have learnt all the parts of speech, one every day. And you will not forget them again, I can promise you."

"Pooh!" said John. "You can't teach me if I don't want to learn. Nobody can."

"I can," said the voice.

"I don't believe you," said John. "And I simply won't learn, so there!"

"He-he!" laughed the squeak, and now it sounded so loud, that it seemed as though the slate was being scratched all over with the pencil. "Don't forget. Your lessons will begin to-morrow, and will last for seven days. Seven parts of speech—seven days in the week. See?"

"How are you going to teach me?" asked John.

"You'll see to-morrow."

"I don't believe you," said John.

"He-he!" laughed the squeak, dancing all over the slate.

"How can you teach me?" argued John. "You are nobody."

"That is just it," said the voice. "That is the very thing you said just now. You said that nobody could teach you. Well, I am Nobody, and I am going to teach you."

"I won't learn," said John.

"You shall," said the squeak.

"I won't," said John.

"You shall," said the squeak. "You shall learn a new part of speech every day for a week."

"How will you teach me?"

"Do you want to know very much?" said the squeaky voice. "Very well. Listen:

"No one values what he has,
When he has a lot;
Everybody wants to get
What he hasn't got.
Things which you make use of most
Are the Parts of Speech;
And you'll value them much more
When they're out of reach."

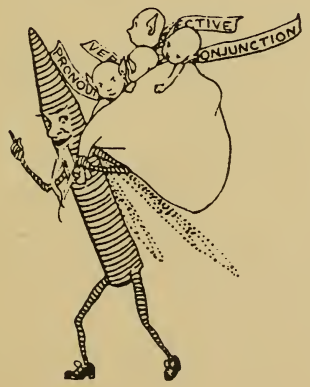
"Ta-ta," continued the squeaky voice, fading away into the distance. "If you want to know, my name is Ram-marg. Don't forget; to-morrow you shall learn what nouns are."

"I don't believe it," said John to himself, after he had listened to see whether the voice would speak to him again. "I don't believe it. I have been dreaming. That's what it is."

"Oh no, you haven't!" squeaked the voice suddenly, and so close to his ear that John nearly tumbled out of bed.

"I wish you wouldn't do that!" said John. "I don't like it. Where are you?"

But, though he strained his ears for a reply, and thought that once he heard a very faint squeak from a far corner of the room, nothing further happened; and he was still listening intently for that squeaky little voice, when he fell fast asleep.



CHAPTER II

THE FIRST LESSON

JOHN LEARNS OF SOMETHING HE CANNOT DO WITHOUT

JOHN was roused from sleep by a sudden flood of sunlight pouring into the room, and, on lifting his head from the pillow, found Miss Walker pulling up the blinds.

"Hullo?" he said sleepily. "Is it——?" He paused, for somehow he had forgotten the word he wanted to use.

"Yes, it is," answered Miss Walker. "And I do hope you are in a better temper than yesterday."

"It's my——." Again he had to pause, for, although the word was on the tip of his tongue, he forgot what it was as soon as he tried to speak it.

"It's your what?" asked Miss Walker, pouring out some water into the basin.

"It's my——you know——my——what-do-you-call-it."

"Birthday, I suppose you mean," said the governess.

"Yes," answered John. "That is what I meant. But haven't I got any——?"

"Any what?" asked Miss Walker.

"Any——."

"Well?"

"Oh, you know what I mean!" said John, a puzzled look on his face.

"I am sure I do not," answered Miss Walker, preparing his clothes.

"Aren't there any——any——thing-um-i-jigs for me?" asked John, sitting up in bed.

"Bless the boy! What do you mean by that?"

"Oh, you know quite well what I mean!" he answered crossly.

"I'm sure I do not," said Miss Walker again. "Come on. Get out of bed, or we shall be late for breakfast."

John obeyed, and began putting on his clothes, trying to think of the word he wanted.

Presently he looked all round the room for something he could not find.

"Where are my——?"

"What?" asked Miss Walker. "What is it you want?"

"My——. Oh, you know!" answered John. But the more he tried to think of the word he wanted, the more confused his mind became.

"How on earth am I to know?" asked Miss Walker. "You silly boy! Why don't you tell me?"

"I can't remember what they are called," he replied helplessly, searching high and low for something he could not find. "They go on my——you know."

"Bless the child!" exclaimed the governess. "What does he want!"

"Don't you know what I mean?" cried John, getting cross. "I want my——the——they go on my——they go on here," and he lifted a bare foot for Miss Walker to see.

"I suppose you mean your stockings," said the governess.

"Yes, that's it," he answered eagerly. "I can't find them anywhere."

"Then why didn't you ask for them?"

"I did!"

"You never mentioned them once," said Miss Walker.

"I couldn't remember what they were called," he answered.

She produced the stockings from the bed, where they were hidden under the bed-clothes, which he had thrown back on rising, and John finished dressing in silence. But, while Miss Walker was brushing his hair, he made another attempt to speak.

"Have you seen——?"

"What?" she asked.

"You know," said John.

"I don't. How can I?" said Miss Walker.

He tried to say the word in vain. He knew very well what it was; he could even spell it in his own mind; but, as soon as ever he tried to speak, it vanished from his memory.

"Oh bother!" he exclaimed at last. "I can't think what the——I can't think what it is I want. I know very well what I want to say, but I forget it."

"Bless the boy!" said Miss Walker again. "What are you talking about?"

"Is she up yet?" asked John. "Have you seen her?"

"Who?"

"Oh, you know! My——; she has got some ——you know——what they give you on your ——." He paused, quite unable to say what he wanted.

Miss Walker looked at him for a moment without speaking.

"Are you quite well?" she asked at last.

"Of course I am!" he answered. "I am quite all right. Only I can't remember the—— the——what I want to say."

The governess made no remark while she finished brushing his hair, and then John went and looked out of the window, while she busied herself about the room. Altogether he felt very strange and bewildered.

"Have you said your prayers?" she asked presently.

"No," said John.

"Then do so now, and then come down to breakfast," and, so saying, she left the room.

John could not understand it at all. Why did he keep on forgetting the words he wanted to use? It made him look such a fool, too. He could use the words quite well now, when he only thought of them, for he could think of

the name of everything in the room and repeat it to himself. To make quite sure, he put out his hand and touched the window.

"G-L-A-S-S," he said to himself. "Glass. That's all right. W-O-O-D—wood. I can say that, too. And yet I could not say stockings, mother, present, birthday, or anything just now."

At that very moment he heard a squeak somewhere in the room, as though a pencil were being scratched over the surface of a slate. He looked round quickly, but nothing could be seen; and, half thinking that he had imagined the noise, he repeated all the words to himself once more. But he had hardly come to the last one when he heard the squeaky noise again, this time quite plainly; and, no sooner did he hear it, than he suddenly remembered his dream. And once more the squeaky little voice seemed to be singing in his ear:

"No one values what he has,
  Whe he has a lot;
Everybody wants to get
  What he hasn't got.
Things which you make use of most
  Are the Parts of Speech;
And you'll value them much more
  When they're out of reach."

"Oh, dear!" he cried in dismay. "I suppose that is what it meant when it said that it would make me learn what a noun is!"

It was certainly very awkward. John knew quite well by now what a noun was, and, if he was doomed to pass the whole day without being able to call things by their names, how would he be able to make people understand him? If he wanted anything, he would not be able to ask for it; if he wanted people, he would not be able to call them. It was certainly very awkward. And who could it be who spoke to him in that squeaky voice? It must be some fairy who had a terrible power; and he began to wish that he had tried a little harder to learn his grammar. But that would not help him out of his present trouble. All such wishes were far too late. They would not give him back his lost power of calling things by their names; and he might wish, and wish, and wish, but it would not save him from looking a fool when Harry Watson and Leslie Lomas came to tea that afternoon. Just fancy, showing them all his presents and not being able to name them! Why, no one would know whether he wanted cake, or jam, or bread and butter, or sugar, or anything at tea, and—how they would laugh at him!

At the thought of the terrible time awaiting him, poor John felt very miserable ; and when Miss Walker called to him to come down to breakfast, he was very nearly in tears.

"O, Mr. Fairy, or whatever you are!" he said aloud. "Please let me off this time. I know what a noun is now, really I do. And I shall never forget again, really I won't. Nouns are names of things, and I can't get on without them. Please do not punish me any more!"

He listened for a reply, but none came, not even a squeak to show that he had been heard. And so, full of dread, he made his way downstairs to the school-room, where his breakfast was waiting for him.

"What have you been doing all this while?" asked Miss Walker as he entered.

John made no reply, for fear of having to use a noun, but looked at the pile of brown-paper parcels at the end of the table. These were his presents, which he very much wanted to open ; but they had to remain where they were until breakfast was over, and his mother had come to the school-room to see him open them.

"Hurry up!" said Miss Walker. "Your porridge is all cold."

John ate his breakfast in silence, not daring to say anything without thinking a great deal first how to avoid using nouns. When he wanted bread and butter, he took it without asking ; and twice he was told by Miss Walker not to grab, as it was very rude. The third time he did it, she made him go without jam as a punishment. When he wanted another cup of tea, he pushed his cup towards the governess, and, after a great deal of thinking he managed to say : "Will you give me some more, please ?"

His silence during the meal surprised Miss Walker, who began to think he must be ill in spite of the amount of breakfast which he took ; for it was very strange for him to be quiet, and quite unusual. But if you try to talk without using any nouns, you will realise how very difficult it was for John to say anything, and you will then understand why it was he had to be so quiet.

And all the while the moment he was dreading came nearer and nearer ; and the nearer it came, the more John thought. But he could not go on eating much longer, and the moment he stopped eating he would have to say grace. And how could he hope to say grace without using a noun ? If he said it wrong, Miss Walker would

think that he did it on purpose ; for, although grace was never said before breakfast, she was always very strict about it after breakfast, and would never allow him to slur[1] it or repeat it wrongly. He made his last piece of bread and butter last as long as possible, while he counted up the number of nouns in that grace, to find to his relief that there was only one. But still, how could he possibly say it without repeating that noun ? He sat back in his chair and thought hard, munching at his last mouthful.

" If you have finished, you had better say your grace," said Miss Walker presently.

John took a deep breath, clasped his hands, and shut his eyes tightly.

" For what we are going to receive——"

" For what we *have* received," corrected Miss Walker.

" For what we have received," he went on quickly, " may we be truly thankful, amen ".

" That is wrong," said Miss Walker. " Say it again."

" For-what-we-have-received-may-we-be-truly-thankful-amen," said John again, all in one breath.

[1] To slur : to speak indistinctly ; not to speak words clearly.

"Say your grace properly this instant," commanded Miss Walker sternly.

"I can't," cried John, almost in tears.

"Nonsense! Say it at once!"

"For what we have received may the Lord make us truly thankful, amen," said John.

Then he gasped, and stared at Miss Walker with open mouth.

"Now you may go," she said.

But John did not move. He had been able to use a noun, when all the while he had thought that he could not!

"The Lord make us truly thankful," he said again, to make quite sure it was true. "The Lord —Lord—sugar, tea, table, room, breakfast, birthday!"

"Bless the boy!" cried Miss Walker in some alarm.

"John, mother, marmalade, cake, fairy, sleep, dream!" continued John. "It was all a dream! I've been dreaming, and it was not true after all! Time! Dream! It was a dream!"

"Bless the boy!" said Miss Walker again.

"Hurrah!" cried John.

The day passed as all birthdays do. The presents were opened, admired, played with, and two were soon broken. His mother kissed him more than usual, and said that he reminded her more and more of his dear father, who was away in America on business; and his two great friends came to tea and broke another of the presents between them; there were glorious games in the schoolroom, and a still more glorious tea afterwards; until John had forgotten everything that had happened that morning, or, if he did remember it, he thought that it was a dream, and had not really happened after all.

And when he went to bed an hour later than usual, because his birthday only came once a year, he gave no thought to anything save what he was going to do on the morrow. These thoughts were, of course, all very pleasant, and, for some time after Miss Walker had put out the light, John lay thinking them all over in the

dark. Then he snuggled down among the bedclothes and prepared to go to sleep.

"John Henry Arthur Percival Sparks," said a squeaky voice at the foot of his bed.

John heard it, but pretended that he did not.

"John Henry Arthur Percival Sparks," said the voice again.

"Go away!" said John. "You are only a dream."

"He-he!" laughed the squeak. "How did you like it?"

John made no answer, but tried to get to sleep. But the more he tried, the wider awake he became.

"What is a noun?" asked the voice, after it had called him by name several times.

"Shut up!" said John. "Let me go to sleep."

"What is a noun?" asked the voice.

"The name of something," answered John crossly. "Now let me go to sleep."

"Presently," said the squeak. "I am going to teach you something else to-morrow."

"What?"

"Pronouns."

"How?"

"Same way."

"But I know them," pleaded John, who began to think that he was not dreaming after all.

"Oh no, you don't!" said the voice. "But you will after to-morrow."

"I don't believe you," said John boldly. "You are only a dream, and nothing happened at all. I only imagined it did."

"Very well," said the squeak. "Good-night!"

John did not answer, but pretended to be asleep; and he pretended so well, that before very long he was asleep in good earnest.

CHAPTER III

THE SECOND LESSON

JOHN LEARNS OF SOMETHING WHICH STANDS IN PLACE OF SOMETHING ELSE

JOHN woke up quite early the next morning, and the first thing he remembered was the queer dream he had had just before falling asleep. But was it a dream? Or had it really all happened?

"I wonder what pronouns are?" he said to himself. Then he thought very hard of all that Miss Walker had tried to teach him about pronouns; so evidently he was not quite sure that it *was* a dream. At any rate, he must have thought it better to be on the safe side, otherwise he would never have taken so much trouble as to think about dry old things like pronouns.

But what were pronouns? Evidently something to do with nouns. But what? He thought and thought for quite a long time, and

he was just on the point of giving it up, when Miss Walker entered the room to call him ; and that shows he must have been thinking about pronouns for a long while.

"Miss Walker," he said a little shyly, hardly daring to speak in case he had not been dreaming and it was all quite true. "What are pronouns ?"

Miss Walker stared at him, as well she might. Never before had he asked a question about his lessons. And so early in the morning, too !

"Pronouns stand in place of nouns," she answered.

Of course they did ! Why had he not remembered that before ?

"Tell me some," he asked.

"I, thou, he, she, it, we, you, they," began Miss Walker. "Me, thee, him, her, us, you, them."

"Me !" exclaimed John. "Why, I've just said one ! 'Tell ME some'. Is 'me' a pronoun ?"

Miss Walker turned to look at him, the water-jug still in her hand, she was so surprised. In fact, she was so surprised that she could not speak, and quite forgot to pour out the water.

"I, thou, he, she, it," repeated John triumphantly.

It was a dream after all! He had never heard a voice telling him that he would not be able to use pronouns so that he might learn what they were. He had dreamt it all!

He was so overjoyed at his discovery, that he had jumped out of bed and had begun to dress himself before Miss Walker had recovered from her surprise.

Ah, my dear John Henry Arthur Percival Sparks, you have yet to learn how deep is the cunning of that mysterious little goblin, which so far you have only heard and not seen. You will not escape him by thinking he is only a dream. Others have thought that, but all have found out, generally when it has been too late, that he is no dream, but a terrible reality.[1]

John, however, did not discover this for a long time; for the morning passed quite comfortably, without anything strange occurring, until he had forgotten all about the squeaky little voice and the warning it had uttered.

But that afternoon, just as Mrs. Sparks had

[1] A terrible re-al-i-ty: something which is very real and not at all nice.

returned in the motor from paying a visit, Miss Walker came to her in a state of great alarm, as Mrs. Sparks was about to enter her bedroom to take off her hat and cloak.

"I am afraid there is something the matter with John, Mrs. Sparks," said the governess.

"Has he hurt himself?" asked Mrs. Sparks quickly.

"No. But there is something funny about him," answered Miss Walker. "He is like a baby who is just beginning to talk. I am afraid there must be something wrong with his brain."

"Goodness gracious!" cried Mrs. Sparks, her face turning a little white. "Come in and tell me what you mean."

She led the way into her beautiful bedroom, and Miss Walker followed her.

"Now," she said, "tell me exactly what has happened."

"This afternoon I made him write a letter to his uncle and aunt to thank them for their beautiful presents," explained Miss Walker. "He can write quite well when he likes; and, when I saw what he had written, I thought that he had simply been naughty and made him write the letter again. But the second letter was just the

same as the first ; and what alarmed me most was that, when he talked, he used the same baby language. It quite frightened me. Here is his letter."

Mrs. Sparks took the note-paper covered with John's large handwriting ; and certainly it was the queerest letter you ever saw. Here it is :

"JOHN'S DEAR UNCLE SAM,

"John is so pleased with the lovely engine and signals Uncle Sam and Auntie have sent John. The engine and signals are lovely. The engine and signals are just the right sort of engine and signals John wanted. Harry and Leslie came to tea with John yesterday, and Harry, Leslie, and John played with the engine and signals Uncle Sam gave John, and Harry, Leslie and John will play with Uncle Sam's engine and signals a lot another day. Thank Uncle Sam so much.

"From Uncle Sam's loving nephew,

"John."

"And that is the way he talks," said Miss Walker.

"Goodness gracious !" exclaimed Mrs. Sparks again. "Where is he ?"

"He is in the schoolroom."

Without waiting to take off her motor-coat, Mrs. Sparks went straight to the schoolroom, followed by Miss Walker. There was John, sitting on the floor surrounded by his toys and playing with his engine.

"John, dear," said his mother, sitting down in a chair. "Come here a minute."

"John must put the signals up first," said the boy. "Then John will come."

He put the signals at danger, and then, rising, went to his mother.

"Here John am," he said.

Mrs. Sparks put her arm round him. "Are you quite well, dear?" she asked.

"Of course John am," he answered.

"How does your head feel?"

"John's head is all right. Why does mother ask how John's head feels?"

"Are you quite sure?" asked Mrs. Sparks, still more anxiously.

"Yes, John am."

"You must not say, 'John am,' but 'I am'."

"John am," said John.

"No, dear. 'I am.'"

"John am," said the boy again.

"Now listen to me, John," said Mrs. Sparks, speaking very slowly. Say 'I am'."

"John am."

"No, dear. 'I am.'"

By this time John began to realise that something was wrong. He could hear what his mother said quite well, but, although he tried to repeat the words after her, he could only say, "John am". Then he suddenly remembered the squeaky little voice of that awful fairy, or goblin, or whatever it was, and stared at his mother in dismay.

"John can't say 'John am,'" he said, turning very red in the face.

"But why not, dear?" asked his mother, who was now very anxious indeed about him.

"Don't know," said John, hanging his head.

He did, really. But how on earth could he tell her? How could he expect her to understand, or even believe him? Oh! those pronouns! Those awful pronouns! At that moment he would have given all the toys on the floor in exchange for words to use in the place of the names which he had to repeat time after time; in fact, whenever he wanted to speak. And there was his mother, looking at him with a

frightened face as though something dreadful had happened to him, as, indeed, it had. It could not be worse.

"John, dear," she said at last, in coaxing tones, "you must be a good boy and let Miss Walker put you to bed."

John started away from her as though he had been stung. What! Go to bed, when he was feeling quite well! Go to bed, when he had not yet had his tea! This was adding insult to injury.

"Mother shan't put John to bed!" he answered angrily. "John is quite well! John doesn't want to go to bed!"

"But you must, dear," said his mother, "You must try to get to sleep. Your brain is very tired, dear, and it must have some rest. I will ask Dr. Lomas to come and see you and make you quite well. Come, dear; there's a good boy."

But this was more than John could stand. Tears sprang to his eyes, and he clenched his fists very hard.

"Come, dear," said his mother again.

Then John became very angry indeed.

"It's the fault of that beastly thing last night!"

he shouted, the tears streaming down his cheeks. "It's not fair! I know what pronouns are quite well, and I won't go to bed! It's not fair!"

He was so angry that he did not notice that he had used pronouns when he was speaking; and it was not until after a great deal of coaxing, struggling, and—what was far worse—a great deal of bribery,[1] that John at last found himself safely tucked up in bed, and remembered that he had been using pronouns after all. He was alone when he made the discovery, which gave him such a shock, that it took him quite ten minutes to think it all over.

"I have been dreaming again," he said to himself presently. "I have been dreaming again, and it never happened after all!"

Then how was it he came to be in bed? Why had his mother been so anxious for him to go to bed that she had promised him another new engine if only he would do what he was told? Was it not because he could not speak properly? And had that not been because he could not make use of pronouns? Then it was true! He had not been dreaming!

[1] Bribery: giving presents to a person for doing something which he does not want to do.

"Of course, you haven't!" said a squeaky little voice at the end of the bed.

John started, and looked in the direction from which the squeak seemed to come. But nothing was to be seen, although it was still broad daylight, and the sun was shining somewhere behind the drawn blinds.

"Well? How do you like it now?" asked the squeak.

"Where are you?" said John.

"Here," said the squeak.

"I can't see you!" said John.

"Of course you can't, looking all round the room for me like that. I can't be everywhere at once, can I? If you look at the end of your bed, perhaps you will see me. Only you'll have to look very hard. I'm sitting on the bed-rail."

John looked as he had been directed. At first he could not see anything; but, all at once, he thought he saw something sticking up out of the brass rail at the foot of his bed. It looked like a short piece of stick or pencil; and, sure enough, as he looked, he found that it was, only the queerest little piece of pencil you ever saw in your life. For it had two little legs and two little arms, so thin that they seemed to be nothing

"It was grinning at John with its funny little face."

more than the strokes of a pencil on a piece of paper or slate ; while the body and head were all of one piece, formed by the pencil itself. And there it was, perched on the rail at the end of his bed, with its thin little hands in the place where its hips should have been, its thin little legs, ending in a pair of boots much too big for its feet, dangling down below the rail ; and it was grinning at John with its funny little face, which was of the same width as its body, and just below the point of the pencil, which was the top of its head.

"Well?" said this funny little animated[1] piece of pencil, wagging a pointed beard and swaying from side to side. "What are pronouns?"

"Have I got to learn any more things?" asked John.

"Yes," said the little mannikin. "To-morrow you must learn what adjectives are."

"But I don't want to," said John.

"I don't suppose you do," replied the visitor. "But you will, for all that."

"Can't I learn them some other way?" pleaded John.

[1] Animated: living.

"Oh!" squeaked the pencil. "So I am not a dream after all, eh?"

"I don't think you can be," answered John.

"And you know what a noun is? Well, what is it?"

John thought it best to humour this strange being, so he answered very humbly, "All the names of things are nouns".

"Quite right," squeaked the pencil. "What are pronouns?"

"Words you use instead of nouns," answered John.

"Quite right," squeaked the little fellow on the bed-rail again. "We are getting on."

"How am I to learn what adjectives are?" asked John, a little anxiously.

"You'll find that out soon enough. Wait till to-morrow."

"But I don't like the way you teach me," said John. "It gets me into trouble. It's all through you that I am in bed now."

"The proper place for you," said the little mannikin, jumping up on his feet. Then he began to sing in a funny little squeak, just as though he was writing noisily on a slate :

"No one values what he has,
When he has a lot;
Everybody wants to get
What he hasn't got."

And, all the time he was singing, he danced to the tune, cocking his thin little legs into the air, and making his big boots clatter on the bed-rail. At last he stopped, quite out of breath, and sat down suddenly.

"Do you understand what that means now?" he asked.

"Yes," answered John meekly. "I think I do."

"Think!" shouted the little man. "You ought to know it by this time!"

"I do," said John hurriedly.

"Do you know who I am?"

"No," said John.

"What!" squeaked the other, "when I have already told you my name!"

"I remember now," said John. "You are called Ram-marg."

"Yes, and don't you forget it!" cried the little man in threatening tones.

"And will you please let me off any more lessons?" began John.

At his request Ram-marg almost fell off his seat with shock.

"What!" he squeaked. "Let you off! Whatever next!"

"Please!" urged John. "I promise you I will learn the other parts of speech."

"Rubbish!" said Ram-marg. "Stuff and nonsense! I don't believe you! I tell you, I don't believe you!"

He jumped up on to the bed-rail once more, dancing with excitement; and the more excited he grew, the squeakier became his voice. At last he was dancing so quickly that John could only see a faint blur on the brass rail, and all the while he was squeaking out this curious song, tapping the time with his funny big boots. And if you repeat it too, beating out the time on the table or desk with your fore-finger, you will understand what a curious noise he must have made.

"I, thou, he, she, it,
We, you, they;
Me, thee, him or her,
Us, you, them."

He had just reached the last word of the song, which he uttered with a piercing squeak, when

John heard a sharp snap as though a slate pencil had suddenly broken in two, and the little man disappeared altogether.

"Thank goodness!" said John, who recognised the sound. "I do hope he has broken himself. Then he won't trouble me any more."

CHAPTER IV

THE THIRD LESSON

SIR ARTHUR JAMES DESCRIBES SOMETHING, BUT HE DOES NOT USE AN ADJECTIVE

THAT same evening Dr. Lomas called in response to an urgent message sent by Mrs. Sparks ; and, after a long talk with her and Miss Walker, he came to the room where John was safely tucked up in bed.

"Well, young man ?" he said, sitting on the side of the bed, and putting an eyeglass into his eye. "What is the matter with you ?"

"That's what I want to know," said John, looking at the eyeglass and wondering what use it could be. He rather liked Dr. Lomas, with his round waistcoat and his bald head, with its single brown curl over his gleaming white forehead, which seemed to have no end until it got to the fringe of hair at the back. Although he was a doctor, John was not in the least bit afraid

of him, as some boys were ; and, when he saw him enter the room, he began to wonder whether he should not tell Dr. Lomas all about his curious adventure. As he was a doctor, he might understand.

"Ah well," said the doctor, taking his wrist and feeling his pulse. "We'll soon find out. Let me look at your tongue."

He always said that, and John's tongue was out of his mouth before he had finished the sentence. And a very long tongue it was, too. He looked sideways at his mother, who stood at the end of the bed, and wished she would go away. Then he might tell the doctor all about it.

"Any headache ?" asked Dr. Lomas, pressing back John's eye-lids and looking closely at his eyes.

"No, thank you," answered John politely.

"Ever see things ?" asked the doctor.

John stared at him, wondering what he meant. Was it possible that he understood ?

"I mean funny lights, and stars, and coloured spots all over the place," said the doctor.

Yes," answered John promptly, "when I bump my nose."

"Ha ! ha !" laughed Dr. Lomas. "Only then ?"

John was silent for a moment. "I have seen something else," he said presently. "And, if mother will go away, I will tell you all about it."

"But won't you tell me, too?" asked Mrs. Sparks.

"No," said John. "You will only laugh."

"I won't. I promise you."

But John refused to say anything in front of his mother, which must have hurt her a great deal. But, then, she had probably laughed at John once before, and he had not forgotten it.

After his mother had left the room, John looked very hard at Dr. Lomas for a moment or two without speaking.

"It's a spell," he said at last, very gravely.

"You don't say so!" said the doctor, trying not to show his surprise.

"It is," said John. "I am bewitched."

"Dear me!" said the doctor. "Tell me all about it."

"It's a fairy," continued John. "It has a squeaky voice, and sits on the end of my bed every evening, and says it will get me into trouble every day until I have learnt my parts of speech."

"Dear me!" said the doctor again. "What is it like?"

"A slate pencil. And it squeaks like one, too."

"Bless my soul!" said Dr. Lomas. "What a wicked fairy it must be! We shall have to get rid of her."

"It isn't a her; it's a him," said John.

"Well, well; we shall have to get rid of him."

"I wish you would," said John.

"Of course we shall," answered the doctor. "How often have you seen her—him, I mean?"

"Once," answered John. "Just before you came in. But I have heard him squeaking several times. Do you think you can make him go away?"

"I'm quite sure we can," said the doctor. "I know a gentleman who spends all his life catching fairies; and I shall bring him to see you to-morrow, and make him catch this one."

"What does he do with them?" asked John.

"Do with them? Why, he puts them in glass bottles and pickles them in spirits of wine. That's the best thing to do with wicked fairies who trouble little boys."

"And will he pickle this one?"

"Rather!" said the doctor. "At any rate, he'll try."

"I hope he will," said John very earnestly.

"I'll tell you what I will do," said the doctor. "I'll give you some stuff to drink. It's a spell, and it will drive this fairy away so that he can't bewitch you any more to-night. Then I will bring the gentleman along to-morrow and see if we can't catch the little beggar."

"Thank you very much," said John gratefully.

Dr. Lomas rose from the bed. "Good-night, young man," he said. "Don't you worry any more about that fairy. He won't trouble you again."

"And you will pickle him, won't you?" said John.

"Rather!" replied the doctor.

A few minutes later, Dr. Lomas was talking to John's mother in the drawing-room.

"It is over-work," he said. "The boy's brain is too active. He must have proper rest and not do any more lessons for a week or two. I'll telephone to Sir Arthur James for a consultation[1] to-morrow."

And everybody was satisfied with the treatment which Dr. Lomas ordered except Miss Walker,

[1] A consult-a-tion: a talking together. The two doctors were to talk together about John.

who was not at all sure that John had been doing too much work. That was a thing he never did.

Much against his will, John had to stay in bed all the next day. But he trusted Dr. Lomas, who had told him that it was a trap for catching the fairy, and he submitted[1] to the treatment, hopefully waiting for the arrival of the gentleman who knew how to catch such evil little people. So far the doctor's spell had worked beautifully, for John had neither seen nor heard anything of the talking pencil. But perhaps he had broken himself yesterday, and would not trouble him again.

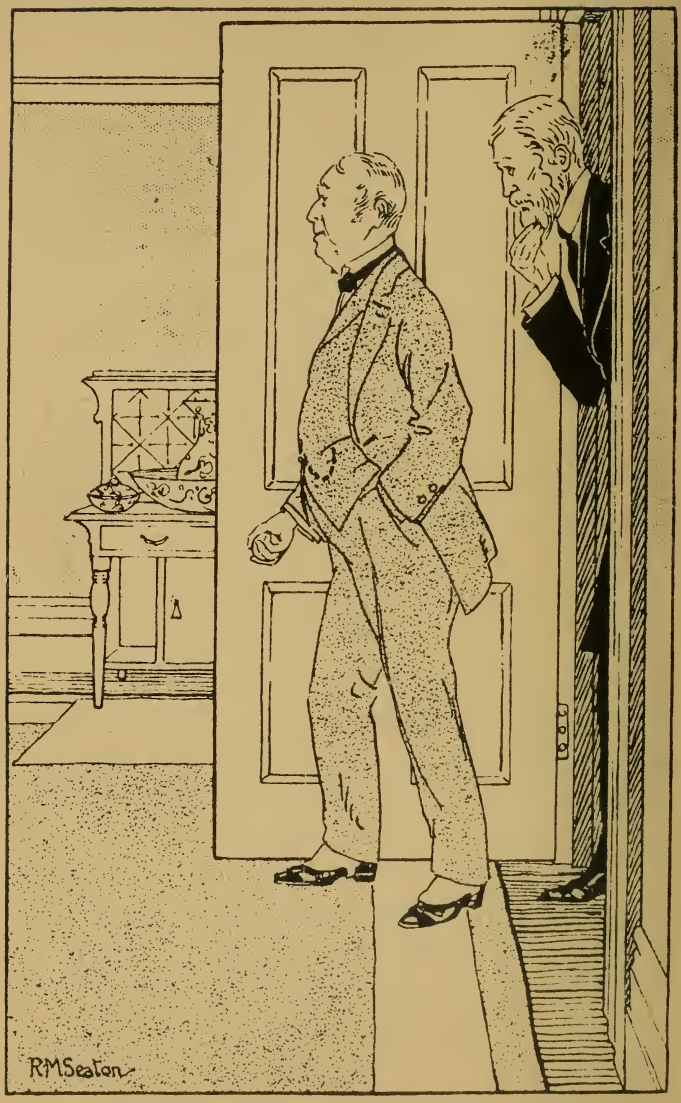
That afternoon a tall gentleman, with a grey beard and very bright blue eyes, entered the room with Dr. Lomas.

"Well, young man," said the doctor. "Here is the gentleman I promised to bring to see you."

John looked at the tall gentleman and did not like him at all. There was something about those bright blue eyes that made shivers go all up and down his spine.

"Has he come to catch the fairy?" he asked.

[1] Sub-mit-ted: he gave in.



A tall gentleman entered the room with Dr. Lomas.

"That's it," said Dr. Lomas, placing a chair by the bedside for Sir Arthur James.

"So you have been seeing fairies, young sir, eh?" said the gentleman with the bright blue eyes, which seemed to be piercing Master John through and through.

"Yes," said John shyly.

"And what is he like, this fairy?"

"Pencil," said John, "with legs and arms and eyes and nose and mouth, and he dances about over there. He says that I am boy, and that he is going to make me boy, and that he will punish me until I am boy."

Dr. Lomas and Sir Arthur James looked at each other.

"Yes," said Sir Arthur. "And what else does he say or do?"

"He comes evening," continued John, quite unaware that the fairy's spell had begun to work again, and that to the two doctors he seemed to be talking nonsense. "Time I could not see him. I could only hear squeak. Time I could not see him either. I could only hear squeak. But time I did see him, and he was pencil."

"And what does he want?" asked Sir Arthur.

"To make me boy," said John.

"But you are a boy."

"No! No! To make me boy and learn lessons," explained John.

"Ah, to make you learn your lessons," said the doctor.

"Yes," said John, who did not want to talk at all to the man with the bright blue eyes. But somehow he had to answer all the questions put to him, whether he liked it or not.

"And does he make you learn your lessons?" asked Sir Arthur.

"Yes."

"And what has he made you learn?"

"Nouns and pronouns. And next he will make me learn adjectives."

"Dear me!" said Sir Arthur. "Now, tell me exactly what this fairy is like."

John thought for a moment before replying.

"He is quite——." Then he paused, and a puzzled look came into his face.

"Yes?" said the doctor.

"He is quite——."

Again John had to pause. He knew quite well what he wanted to say, but somehow the right word would not come.

"Little?" suggested the doctor. "Is that the word? Anything else?"

"Yes," said John. "He has arms and legs——."

"How many?" asked Sir Arthur.

John tried to say the number of arms and legs the thing had, and at last he held up two fingers.

"Two arms and two legs?"

"Yes," said John.

"And what does he look like?"

"Pencil."

"What sort of pencil?"

The boy tried to tell him, but he could not; and the more the doctor asked him to describe that awful fairy, the more hopeless it became. He simply could not tell him what the little imp was like.

"Is he pretty or ugly?" asked Sir Arthur.

"Yes," said John.

"Which do you mean?"

"I don't know," answered John helplessly.

"But you must know whether he is pretty or ugly, if you have seen him."

"I do know," answered John, now on the point of crying. "But I cannot say."

"Why not?"

"I don't know."

Suddenly John sat up in bed. "Is word adjective?" he asked.

"No," said Sir Arthur. "Word is a noun."

"No! No!" exclaimed John. "Word you said when you asked if he was—if he was—you know."

"Pretty?" suggested Dr. Lomas.

"Yes!" said John eagerly. "Is it adjective?"

"Yes. Pretty is an adjective. All words that describe things are adjectives."

"Oh!" cried John, falling back on the pillow, as he suddenly realised what had been occurring. "Then it's fairy again! He said something would happen until I had learnt what adjectives are." And then he began to cry.

Sir Arthur James took his hand. "Look here, little man," he said kindly, looking at him with his keen blue eyes. "You must not worry any more about that fairy. There are no such things as fairies. Do you understand?"

The blue eyes glittered so brightly, that John simply had to leave off crying.

"Do you understand?" said Sir Arthur again. "There are no such things as fairies, and you have never seen one."

"Yes," said John obediently. But, even as he said it, he distinctly heard an angry little squeak somewhere in the room.

"So you must not think about them any more," continued Sir Arthur. "Will you promise?"

"Yes," said John, simply because he could not say anything else while those blue eyes were looking at him.

"Now you must go to sleep," went on Sir Arthur. "And, while you are asleep, you will forget all about fairies, so that you will not even remember them when you wake up. Now; go to sleep."

So John closed his eyes because there was nothing else to do except obey; and soon he was alone in the room, listening dreamily to the footsteps of the two doctors as they went downstairs.

"Well, Sir Arthur? What is your opinion?" asked Dr. Lomas as they entered the drawing-room.

The great specialist—a specialist is a man who is considered by some people to have a special knowledge of a special thing—the great specialist put his hands behind his back, and walked up and down the room a few times before speaking, looking very profound all the while. Dr. Lomas

stood with an air of great respect, waiting for the verdict[1] of the great specialist.

"In my opinion," said Sir Arthur James, as he crossed the room for the fourth time, "it is a case of metagrammapsychosis."

That is a long word, and you certainly will not be able to pronounce it yourself, so you had better get some grown-up to do it for you. And do not think that because he or she takes some time to pronounce it, he or she does not know how to read very well. And be sure you do not ask what it means, for no one will be able to tell you. If you really want to know the meaning of it, you will have to get it from Sir Arthur James. But I should advise you to do nothing of the sort; for, if you did ask Sir Arthur what it means, he would probably be rather annoyed with you, for it is a word that has caused him a great deal of trouble.

As a matter of fact, when Sir Arthur first pronounced it, he did not know what it meant himself. Our little friend, John Henry Arthur Percival Sparks, had puzzled the great specialist a great deal more than he liked to admit; and the great specialist did not know what to make of

[1] Verdict: the opinion or idea which Sir Arthur had about the causes of John's strange manner.

him. But he did know that Dr. Lomas would expect him to express an opinion ; and, as he would receive a cheque for fifteen guineas or so for that opinion, he would have to say something. So all the way downstairs, and all the while he was walking up and down the drawing-room, he was thinking out a name to give to the strange disease from which poor John was supposed to be suffering. And it was not until he had crossed the room for the third time that he found a sufficiently difficult word to utter.

"It is a case of metagrammapsychosis," he said.

"A conclusion at which I myself have arrived," said Dr. Lomas.

Sir Arthur James started. How dare Dr. Lomas, who was not a specialist, but only a common[1] or garden sort of doctor, have an opinion at all? Had he not asked for his, the great specialist's, opinion? He had no business to come to any other conclusion save that he, the great specialist, had made a very learned and profound discovery. Dr. Lomas must be taken down a peg or two.

"It is a very rare case," said Sir Arthur, "very

[1] Common or garden sort of doctor: just an ordinary doctor, and not a specialist.

rare. It is only the second I have had in all my experience."

Dr. Lomas bowed. "I remember your description of the first case, which you published," he said. "I was so struck with the way in which you treated the subject, that I was easily able to diagnose[1] the symptoms in this case."

"Indeed," said Sir Arthur stiffly; "I do not recollect that I ever described my first case."

"Then my memory is at fault," said Dr. Lomas humbly. "May I ask what treatment you prescribe?"[2]

"Hypnotic suggestion,"[3] answered Sir Arthur. "I shall treat the boy myself, and shall be obliged if you will report his condition to me every day."

"Certainly. With pleasure," said Dr. Lomas.

Meanwhile, Master John was snoozing comfortably upstairs. He was in a beautiful dreamy

[1] To di-ag-nose the symptoms: to find out the illness a person is suffering from through looking at the tongue, feeling the pulse, and noticing other signs of illness. "The case" means the person who is suffering. Here it is John.

[2] Prescribe: a word used by doctors when they order treatment in illness.

[3] Hyp-not-ic sug-gestion: the use of a strong will to compel another person to obey. Sir Arthur means that he is going to use his will on John to make him forget all about fairies.

state, half awake, half asleep; and it was some time before a continual squeaking, scratching, and tapping at the end of the bed made him aware that he was wanted. But at last he realised that the noise was meant to attract his attention, so he opened one eye. There, sure enough, he saw, or thought he saw, that horrible little live slate pencil sitting on the bed-rail.

"John Henry Arthur Percival Sparks!" squeaked the voice again and again. "Wake up! I want you!"

"Oh, bother!" said John. "Go away, do! The doctor says you aren't anything."

"John Henry Arthur Percival Sparks! Wake up! I want you!" said the squeak.

"I won't!" answered John. "Doctor says you are not real, and that I am not to notice you any more."

But it was really such an awful lot to say, that the saying of it woke John right up; so that, although he wanted to go to sleep, he found himself wide awake. And there was that slate pencil, grinning away at him from the end of the bed.

"What is an adjective?" asked Ram-marg.

"Words that tell you what things are like,"

answered John promptly. "Now go away and leave me alone."

"Oh dear no! I haven't finished with you yet," squeaked the pencil. "How do you like it, eh?"

"I think you are very unkind."

"He! He!" squeaked Ram-marg. "I am much kinder to you than you are to yourself."

"The doctor says I am not to learn any more lessons," said John. "So you will have to leave me alone now."

The little figure on the bed-rail got so excited at his words, that he danced up and down in anger, moving at such a rate that John could scarcely see him.

"He said that, did he?" he screamed. "He said that, did he? He said there were no fairies! I heard him! He said there were no fairies!"

His voice rose to a piercing squeak that ended with a sudden sharp snap, as though the pencil had broken in two, and at the same time the little fellow completely disappeared.

"There! Now he has gone and broken himself again!" said John.

"No, I haven't," said the squeaky voice

presently; and, on looking again, John found him still seated on the bed-rail. "But you should not make me so excited. It is bad for my nerves, you know. I always end in snapping in two when I get excited, and then I have all the trouble of joining together again."

"What! Like the worms?" asked John.

"Worms!" squeaked the little man.

"Well, they join together again when they are cut in half."

"Worms!" shouted Ram-marg. "I never heard of such a thing! Don't insult me!"

"I'm sorry," said John.

"I should hope you are," said Ram-marg. "You have no idea what a lot of trouble I am taking over you."

"It's awfully good of you," said John. "But I wish you wouldn't."

"Look out!" suddenly shouted the little fellow. "I'm going!"

Even as he spoke the words, he began to fade away from sight, much to John's astonishment. But, although John could no longer see him, he could still hear his squeaky voice coming from the place where he had been.

"Back in a minute," it said.

John waited, wondering; and, presently, there was the little fellow again, grinning at him from the brass rail.

"Sorry," he said. "It is that confounded doctor. He ought not to be allowed to come here. It makes it most difficult for me to talk to you properly."

"Why?" asked John in surprise.

"Because he is trying to put a spell on you," said Ram-marg. "He is trying to make you believe that there are no such things as fairies. Look out! I'm going again!" and he disappeared once more.

But in less than a minute he was back again.

"He is trying to make out that I am not I," he continued. "He is pretending there are no fairies. The impudence! The wickedness! He wants to stop my work! He wants to put a spell on you, so that you will not see or hear me any more."

"He's only pretending," said John. "But I'll tell you what he does want. He wants to catch you; and, if you don't mind, he will one day. And then he'll put you in a glass jar and pickle you."

"What!" shouted the little man, beginning to dance once more with anger. "Catch me! I'd

like to see him do it! Pickle me! I'd like to see him do it! Let him beware! How dare he insult me so! Let him look out! I can play at pickles as well as he. The wickedness! The impudence! How dare he! Fibs! Fibs! All fibs! Don't you believe him! Let him wait! I'll soon pickle him!"

His voice rose to a piercing shriek, and once more there sounded the snap of a broken pencil, just as the little man melted clean away into nothingness. John waited for him to come back, but he waited in vain. Then he began to feel sleepy, and lay back on his pillow. But suddenly he became wide awake.

"Oh!" he thought. "And he never told me what was to happen to-morrow!"

CHAPTER V

THE FOURTH LESSON

JOHN LEARNS THAT HE CAN HAVE TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING

JOHN did not mind having no lessons to do, but he did object to staying in bed instead of being up and playing with his toys. But stay in bed he had to ; until he became so fidgety and cross that, after Mrs. Sparks had spoken to Dr. Lomas over the telephone, he was allowed to get up soon after dinner. It was no good making the boy's brain too excited by refusing to let him do what he liked, said the doctor ; an opinion which Mrs. Sparks was very relieved to hear, as John was certainly rather a tiresome person to look after while he was in bed.

So John got his own way at last by being wilful and cross, as many another little boy or girl has done before, and probably will continue to do as long as there are boys and girls, and

mothers and people to give in to them. Only you must remember that John was supposed to be very ill, and everyone believed that it was very bad for him to get excited. To resist his wishes too much might bring on a fit or something horrible ; so what was his poor mother to do ? How was she to know that really John was perfectly well, and that it was very bad for him to have his own way ? Of course, she was to blame to some extent, because she had been told quite plainly that John's funny way of talking was all due to the spell of a fairy ; but, as she did not believe in fairies and did believe in Dr. Lomas and Sir Arthur James, she naturally thought that John's strange story about a fairy was due to something being wrong with his brain. So she was dreadfully anxious about him, as she feared that he might go quite mad.

However, John was very far from mad ; he was only being taught a very sharp lesson which he did not want to learn. And many other people are thought mad for the very same reason : they are learning lessons which those who think them mad do not understand.

The first thing John thought that morning as soon as he woke was : "I wonder what will

happen to-day?" He was getting accustomed to all the funny things which were occurring. People were ever so much kinder and nicer to him than they had been. They all seemed so sorry for him; and as he had no lessons, and at last was allowed to do just what he liked, he began to feel that he would not mind what tricks the fairy played upon him in the future.

All that morning nothing happened; and, by the time he was up and dressed, he had forgotten all about the fairy, and did not remember him again until Dr. Lomas called to see him.

"Well, young man!" said the doctor, as he entered the nursery with Mrs. Sparks. "Have you seen any more fairies?"

John looked up at him from within a circle of railway lines, round which an engine was racing at a dangerous speed.

"Yes," he said. "He came came came soon after you went went went."

"Ah," replied the doctor. "And what did he say?"

"He said said said that you had had had better look look look out, and that if you tried tried tried to pickle to pickle to pickle him, he would would

would pickle pickle pickle you if you were were were not careful."

The doctor looked surprised, as well he might.

"John, dear," said his mother, "you must not be so rude to Dr. Lomas."

"Well," answered John, "he asked asked asked me, so I told told told him."

"Ah! So he said he would pickle me, did he?" asked the doctor.

"Yes," answered John. "And he said said said a lot of other things, too. He told told told me that you are are are trying trying trying to put to put to put a spell on me to stop to stop to stop his work; and he was was was very angry."

"Dear me!" said Dr. Lomas, putting his eye-glass into his eye for the sixth time. "Dear me! And what is that you are playing with?"

"An engine."

"Does it go?"

"Of course it does does does!" said Jack scornfully, as he sent the engine racing round the track to show its speed.

"Where did you get it?" asked the doctor.

"Uncle gave gave gave it to me for my birthday," answered John. "When are are are you

going going going to catch to catch to catch that fairy ?"

"Oh, we'll soon catch him," said the doctor.

"Mind mind mind he does does does not catch catch catch you," said John.

The doctor laughed. "Now, say that again," he said.

"Say say say what again ?" asked John.

"What you said just now."

"Say say say what again," said John.

"What you said just now," repeated the doctor.

"Say say say what again."

"No, dear ! Don't you understand ?" said Mrs. Sparks. "Dr. Lomas wants you to repeat the words you said just now."

"I did did did," said John. "He told told told me to say to say to say what I said said said just now, and I did did did."

Dr. Lomas scratched the back of his head, and Mrs. Sparks looked at him anxiously.

"Look here, young man," he said. "Say this after me : 'I can speak quite well when I like'."

"So I can can can," said John.

"Say the same words as I do," continued the doctor, speaking very slowly.

"'The same words as I do do do,'" said John.

"It's no use!" said the doctor, looking at Mrs. Sparks helplessly. "He is too excited."

"John, dear," said his mother coaxingly. "Listen to me very carefully. Say: 'I can speak quite well when I like.'"

"'I can can can speak speak speak quite well when I like like like,'" repeated John.

"Try to say it properly, dear," urged his mother.

"I do do do," said John.

"But you don't," answered his mother. "You say it like this: 'I can can can speak speak speak quite well when I like like like'."

"Do do do I speak speak speak like that?" asked John, beginning to understand.

"Yes, dear. And it sounds so silly."

"You are stuttering," said the doctor.

"Do do do I really stutter stutter stutter?" asked John.

"I should think you do!" replied Dr. Lomas, who was feeling rather angry to find that Mrs. Sparks had succeeded where he had failed.

"What words do do do I stutter stutter stutter?"

"'Do' and 'speak' and 'like' and 'go,'" answered his mother.

"What are are are they called called called?" asked John, realising at last that the fairy had been up to his tricks again, and was making him look silly. "Are are are they adverbs?"

"No. They are verbs," said the doctor.

"Can can can not I talk talk talk properly?"

"No, dear. You do not talk very well to-day," answered Mrs. Sparks.

"Then I must must must learn learn learn what verbs are are are," said John. "Then I shall shall shall talk talk talk properly. The fairy said said said so."

"Very well," said Dr. Lomas cheerfully. "You learn what verbs are. Verbs are words that tell you what things do or what they have done to them."

"The fairy has has has done done done something to me," said John. "Will will will you catch catch catch him and pickle pickle pickle him?"

"We'll catch him all right," said the doctor.

"I want want want to see to see to see him in pickle," said John.

"Well, be a good boy, and you shall," said the doctor. "Good-bye."

"Good-bye," said John.

"O, Dr. Lomas, whatever can be the matter with him?" asked Mrs. Sparks, after they had left the schoolroom.

"It is a case of metagrammapsychosis," said the doctor, who had been up all night trying to find out what the word meant, but without success.

"That sounds very dreadful," said Mrs. Sparks.

"It is a very rare case," answered Dr. Lomas, looking very profound. "A very rare case. Sir Arthur informs me that it is only the second he has met with. But I think we shall cure him all right."

"Do you really?"

"Oh, yes," said the doctor.

"He is very much worse to-day," said John's mother. "I'm so afraid he is going to be an idiot. I couldn't bear it! Anything better than that!"

"Pooh! My dear madam!" said Dr. Lomas. "Pray do not alarm yourself. I can assure you there is no danger of that. None whatever. You may leave him to us with every confidence." [1]

Dr. Lomas drove home very deep in thought; and as soon as he reached his study, he went to the telephone and called up Sir Arthur James.

[1] With every confidence: with perfect trust that they could make John well again.

"Ah, yes," said Sir Arthur's voice at the other end of the wire. "And how does he seem to-day?"

And then followed a lot of learned talk, in which the two doctors used many long words which I will not attempt to repeat, but by means of which Dr. Lomas informed Sir Arthur that John was stuttering very badly, and still believed that he was bewitched by a fairy who was trying to make him learn grammar. The great specialist made several notes of all that Dr. Lomas told him; said that John was on no account to do any more lessons, and that he would come down and see him on the morrow.

Meanwhile John had returned to his clockwork engine quite calmly. He did not mind not talking properly for a little while, as long as he was allowed to do what he liked and play his games; and he thought he might just as well put off learning what verbs were until he felt inclined. But he had not returned to his games ten minutes before Miss Walker entered the school-room.

"There are two friends of yours downstairs," she announced.

"Who?" asked John.

"Harry and Leslie. Would you like to see them?"

Now John very much wanted to see them. It would be much more fun to have someone to play with, and Harry and Leslie were his two particular chums. But it was a moment or two before he answered.

"Can can can I speak speak speak properly?" he asked at last.

Miss Walker looked at him, for she had not yet been told of the strange way in which he was talking.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"If I speak speak speak properly, I will will will see see see them," he explained.

"Well, you will not speak properly all the while you stutter," replied Miss Walker.

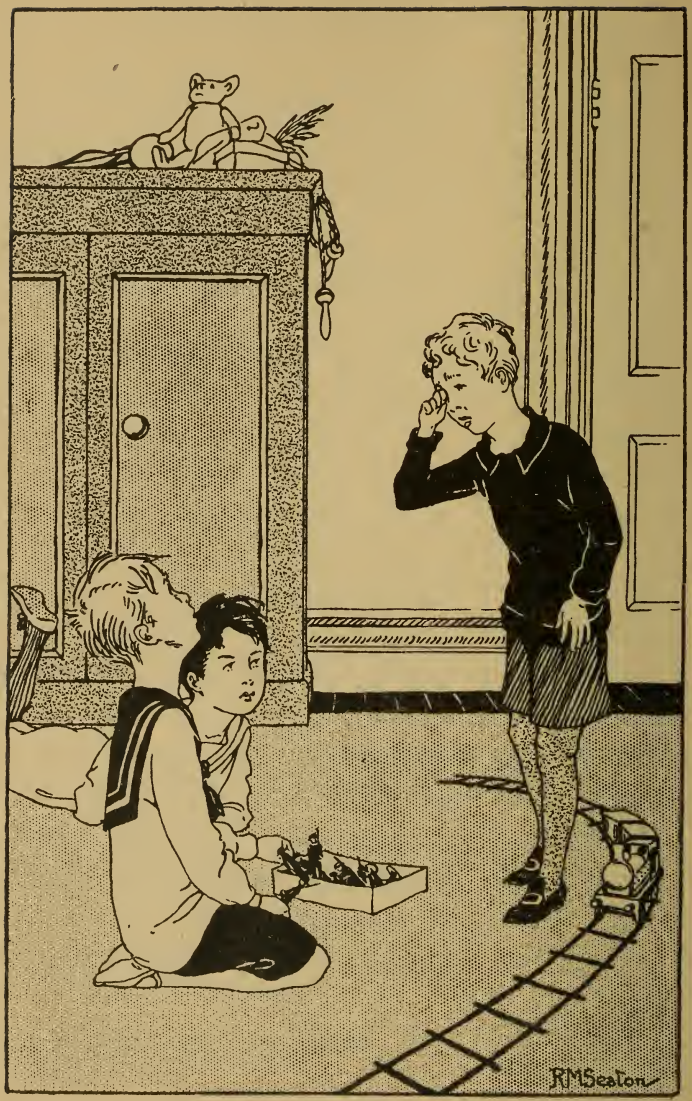
"Will will will they laugh laugh laugh at me?"

Then Miss Walker had a sudden idea. "Why should they?" she said; and John at once consented to see them.

Harry and Leslie were about the same age as John, and all three were great friends.

"Hullo!" they said as they entered the room. "How are you?"

"All right," said John. "Come come come and play play play."



"Who's the driver?" asked Harry.

The two boys looked at him in some surprise, and then sat down on the floor by the railway.

"Let let let us run run run a troop train," suggested John. "Get get get the soldiers, Harry; and you shunt shunt shunt the train, Leslie."

"All right," said Leslie. "I'll shunt shunt shunt the train."

John looked at him to see if he was laughing, but Leslie's face was quite serious.

"Who's the driver?" asked Harry, taking khaki soldiers from a box.

"I am am am," said John. "Push push push the carriage along."

"Can't you talk properly?" asked Leslie.

"Of course I can can can," said John.

"Can can can," mimicked Leslie. "You are quite barmy!"

"So are are are you," said John.

"So are are are you," mimicked Leslie.

"Shut shut shut up!" cried John.

"Shut shut shut up!" said Leslie, still copying him. "He's quite barmy!"

"If you say say say that again I will will will hit hit hit you!" cried John, getting angry.

"He's going to hit hit hit me! Look look look out!" said Leslie.

John grew very red in the face, a sure sign that he was losing his temper. But the more he tried to speak, the more he stuttered, the more foolish he looked, and the more the others mimicked him. And when at last he burst out crying with anger, Miss Walker thought it about time to intervene, and bundled the two boys off home.

So John soon found out that it would not do to be lazy; for, when he came to think things over calmly, he realised what an awful thing it would be for him if he were always to talk like this, as he certainly would unless he took the trouble to learn what verbs were. And it was just when he had come to this conclusion that Miss Walker received the biggest surprise in her life. For suddenly John asked for a book, and said that he was going to pick out all the verbs he could find on one page. He stuttered as he said it; but, when he had opened the book, he picked out all the verbs without making one mistake; and, what is more wonderful still, he never stuttered once as he repeated them. Which shows that at last Master John understood what a verb was.

It was a long while before he went to sleep that night; not because he could not, but because

he wanted to keep awake. He tried everything to prevent himself from falling asleep. He pretended that his bed was an engine which he was driving from London to Eastbourne; then that it was a taxi-cab, and that he was taking people home from the theatres on a very dark night in a very thick fog; after that, he turned himself into the captain of a man-of-war, firing big guns right and left at the enemy's fleet, which he fought single-handed; and then, growing tired of the more exciting games, he sang to himself all the songs he could think of, and repeated all the poetry he could remember, until he actually found himself slipping off into a doze, and woke with a start to play his imaginary games all over again.

"I do wish he would hurry up and come!" he sighed, with a great yawn that almost dislocated[1] his jaw. "I do wish he would come!"

Of course, you will have guessed for whom he was waiting; but, in spite of all his efforts to keep awake, that animated slate-pencil obstinately refused to appear. That was very unfortunate, for John was fully determined to be very nice to the little man this time, to beg his pardon most humbly for having defied him, and to ask him to

[1] Dis-lo-cate: to put out of place; to put bones out of joint.

release him from the horrible spells which made him look so silly in front of all his friends. He was ready to promise that he would learn his grammar ever so well in the future, if only this terrible little fairy would leave him alone; and, full of these good intentions,[1] John tried to keep awake until Ram-marg should appear, which he knew the fairy was sure to do if only he waited long enough. But, as the time went on and he grew sleepier and sleepier, John could hold out no longer.

"Perhaps he doesn't mean to come any more," he murmured to himself. "Perhaps he is going to leave me alone after all."

And then he snuggled down among the bed-clothes, and gave up trying to keep awake any longer.

He had just dreamed that he found himself in front of a long table, on which he counted a hundred and forty-two strawberry ices, seventy-nine bars of chocolate, thirty-six oranges, and sixty jam tarts of all shapes and sizes, all of which had been brought to him by hundreds of animated slate-pencils who squeaked and squeaked and squeaked as they piled all these good things on the table one

[1] Good in-ten-tions: the good things he meant to do.

after the other, when he suddenly found himself wide awake, and that everything of which he had dreamed had disappeared, with the exception of the squeaks.

"Wake up! Wake up! Wake up!" said the squeak from the end of his bed.

"Oh, bother!" said John, rather annoyed to find that the chocolate and the oranges and the ices and the tarts were not real after all. "Why can't you leave me alone?"

Alas! Poor John had already forgotten his good intentions to treat the fairy politely, and these had vanished like the other good things in his dream.

"Leave you alone!" squeaked the fairy sharply. "Leave you alone, when you have been waiting for me all this time! What next, I should like to know?"

"Well, why didn't you come before?" asked John.

"How could I, when that stupid doctor would keep on interfering!" answered Ram-marg. "Why, it was as much as I could do to get here at all. Do you know what he is doing? He is trying to put a spell on you. That's what he's doing. He is trying to make me a blank. He is

trying to wipe me out altogether. He is trying to make me into nothing. The idiot! As though he could make something into nothing! But let him look out. I'll pickle him! I'll pickle him!"

John could tell from the rattle and clatter on the bed-rail that Ram-marg was dancing up and down with anger; and, feeling rather cross and sleepy, he took no trouble to pacify the little gentleman.

"I wish he *would* pickle you," he grumbled.

No sooner had he said the words, than there sounded a loud crack at the bottom of the bed. Then there was silence.

"That's done it," said John, after listening for some time without hearing anything. "Now he's broken himself all to pieces."

"John Henry Arthur Percival Sparks," squeaked the voice close to his ear, speaking very slowly and distinctly, "I am going to break you in pieces for that."

"What are you going to do with me?" asked John, rather frightened at the threat.

"ADVERBS!" squeaked the voice.

"What do you mean?"

"PREPOSITIONS!" squeaked the voice a little more faintly.

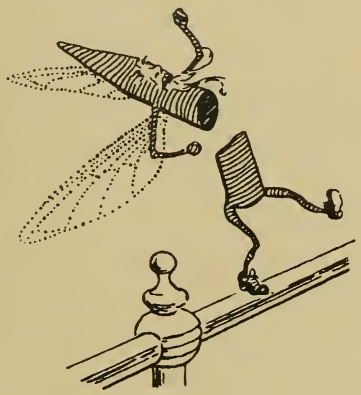
"I don't understand," said John.

"CONJUNCTIONS!" squeaked the voice, now right away in the distance.

"I wish you would tell me what you mean," said John; but, though he listened for a long while, no reply came out of the darkness.

"I wonder what he does really mean," said John at last.

And then he fell fast asleep.



CHAPTER VI

THE FIFTH LESSON

JOHN FINDS THINGS UPSIDE DOWN, AND SO DOES SIR ARTHUR JAMES

"SHALL I send for John now?" asked Mrs. Sparks, after a long talk with Sir Arthur James and Dr. Lomas in the drawing-room. "Perhaps you would like to see him here."

"My dear madam, not by any means!" exclaimed the great specialist, rising from the arm-chair in which he was sitting. "It is most important that the patient should be examined in the surroundings to which he is accustomed, so as to avoid exciting the mind as much as possible. If you will permit me, I will accompany you to the nursery."

He coughed and looked towards Dr. Lomas. "Perhaps, doctor, it would be as well for me to see my young patient alone," he said, lifting his eyebrows.

"Certainly. Most certainly," replied Dr. Lomas

heartily, though he was really just a little annoyed at not being allowed the satisfaction of a consultation on the spot with so great a man as Sir Arthur. "Most certainly."

Sir Arthur walked upstairs with Mrs. Sparks to the schoolroom, where John was once more playing with his beloved clock-work engines; and, at a sign from his mother, Miss Walker left the room.

"Well, my young gentleman," said Sir Arthur, looking at John with his keen blue eyes. "And how are you to-day?"

"Very bad, thank you," said John, rising from the floor and standing shyly before the great specialist.

"H'm! You don't look bad," replied Sir Arthur. "What is the matter with you?"

"Nothing," said John, rather surprised at the question. "I said I felt very bad."

"Yes, I know. But where do you feel bad? In your tummy, or your head, or your big toe, or what?"

"Everywhere," answered John.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Sir Arthur with a short laugh. "What an extraordinary young gentleman you must be, to be sure! Now,

supposing you tell me where you feel bad. Is your tummy all right?"

"No," answered John.

"Let me look at your tongue."

John put out his very long tongue, which the doctor examined.

"Nothing wrong with that," he muttered. "How is your head?"

"It is very bad," said John.

"Yes, but in what way? Does it ache?"

"Yes."

"Can you see things properly?"

"No."

"Can you see me?"

"No," said John.

"O John!" cried Mrs. Sparks. "Whatever can be the matter with him?"

"Come! Come!" said Sir Arthur sharply. "Now you are trying to be silly."

"I am!" exclaimed John with indignation.

"Well then, be sensible, there's a good boy. Now then; can you see my finger?" and Sir Arthur held up a fat forefinger a few inches away from John's face.

"No," said John, looking at it, and nearly squinting as he did so.

"Try and touch it," said the doctor.

John put out his hand at once, and touched the finger.

"O John!" exclaimed his mother. "Why do you tell such untruths?"

"I do!" cried John indignantly. He was perfectly well, really, and could not understand why he was being asked so many foolish questions; for at present he did not realise that he was answering them all wrongly.

Sir Arthur looked puzzled, and seemed at a loss to know what to do next. So, to gain time, he took a chair and sat down quite close to John, who stood, toying with the engine in his hand.

"Now look here, little man," he said kindly, "you must not be afraid of me, or shy, or anything like that, because we are going to be friends, you know."

John was not so sure about that; but he said nothing, and Sir Arthur continued:

"Your mother says that you have not been well lately, and she has asked me to come and put you quite right again. See? So you must be a good little boy and do just what I tell you, and not be frightened and think that I am going to do anything horrible, because I am not. See?

Now tell me: what do you do with yourself all day?"

"I play with my toys," answered John, who began to have vague ideas that everyone was conspiring to persecute[1] him by asking the silliest questions they could think of.

"And where do you play with your toys?"

"There," said John.

"Yes. But where is that?"

"There," said John, raising his hand and waving it round the room. "In the schoolroom."

"Oh, here?"

"No! There!" said John, getting cross.

Mrs. Sparks looked more frightened than ever, and Sir Arthur looked grave.

"Have you seen the fairy any more?" he asked.

"No."

"No more dreams?"

"No," answered John. "But he is nicely angry with you. He says you interfere with him, and that he is going to pickle you."

He remembered that he had annoyed Dr. Lomas with this same remark, and hoped that it

[1] Con-spir-ing to per-se-cute: doing their best to worry him.

would have the like effect upon Sir Arthur James, for whom he felt a hearty dislike.

"Oh! He said that, did he? And when did he say that?" asked Sir Arthur.

"To-morrow," answered John.

"Bless the boy!" exclaimed Sir Arthur, and Mrs. Sparks began to cry.

"I waited down for him to-morrow," continued John, "and I kept asleep until he came. But before I had fallen awake, he came and woke me down. He said that you never interfered with him, so that he could come far to me. He was nicely angry with you. He said he was getting a pickle unready for you."

"Dear me!" said Sir Arthur; and Mrs. Sparks gave a sob.

"What is the matter?" asked John, looking at his mother anxiously.

"Nothing! Nothing!" cried Mrs. Sparks, flinging her arms round him and hugging him close. Then she ran out of the room.

"Ahem!" said Sir Arthur.

"Will you please tell me what is the matter with my mother?" asked John.

"Matter?" said Sir Arthur. "Bless my soul!

Perhaps I had better go and see. You stay here and play with your toys like a good boy."

Then Sir Arthur followed Mrs. Sparks from the room.

John stood and listened to the sound of his footsteps as he made his way down-stairs to the drawing-room, the reason for all these extraordinary proceedings slowly dawning on his mind. Then he went to the book-case, and, finding an English Grammar, began turning over its pages.

"Well, Sir Arthur?" said Dr. Lomas, as the great specialist entered the drawing-room alone. "What is your opinion to-day?"

"I shall continue my treatment," said Sir Arthur loftily.

"Then it is proving successful?"

"I am perfectly satisfied," answered Sir Arthur. "The patient is progressing quite normally."[1]

He walked to the bell, rang it, and requested the maid who answered the summons to inform Mrs. Sparks that Sir Arthur James would like to speak to her in the drawing-room.

"I presume that you still wish me to keep the boy under observation, and report to you at inter-

[1] Pro-gress-ing quite nor-mal-ly: getting on very nicely.

vals,"[1] remarked Dr. Lomas, as the maid shut the door behind her.

"I am hoping to persuade his mother to allow him to enter one of my nursing homes," said Sir Arthur.

"Ah! Then you consider the case serious?"

"Certainly not," replied Sir Arthur sharply. "It is interesting, merely interesting."

And then he gave Dr. Lomas a lengthy explanation of poor John's strange disease, in which many long words were used, as they always are between doctors when they are talking professionally, and which all sounded very learned and profound. And, as Sir Arthur appeared to see the whole matter very clearly, Dr. Lomas thought it best to show that he could see it clearly too; indeed, there is no doubt that he understood every word the great specialist said, which is more than I can, and which is certainly more than Sir Arthur could himself. For, although a fairy was really at the bottom of all this trouble, not once did the great doctor make use of this word in the whole of his long explanation. Of course, there is no knowing that he might not have said something about a fairy, had he had time to finish his

[1] At in-ter-vals: from time to time.

lecture. It must have been a very long one, too ; for he had not finished it by the time Mrs. Sparks entered ; and she had had time to wash her face and do her hair, which takes a lady a very long time indeed. In spite of all her efforts with water and powder, it was quite easy to see that she had been crying.

"Send John into your nursing home!" she cried, as soon as the specialist had made the proposal. "O, Sir Arthur, I could never do that!"

"But, my dear madam, that is nothing so very dreadful," said Sir Arthur. "You would be able to see him every day."

"You must think him in a very dangerous condition," said Mrs. Sparks, starting to cry all over again.

"Not at all, dear madam ; not at all," replied Sir Arthur. "I merely wish to keep him under observation.[1] It is only that the unconscious cerebrations of the anterior lobes in which the cortical cellular tissues[2]—" and he once more began his long and learned lecture, which left Mrs. Sparks exactly as wise as she was before he started

[1] To keep him under ob-ser-va-tion : to watch him very closely.

[2] These are long words used by doctors when they talk about the brain.

it. He ended by assuring her that there was nothing the matter with John that he could not cure, if only she would allow him to enter his nursing home in Belgrave Crescent.

But this Mrs. Sparks positively refused to do, partly because of the terrible expense of the nursing home, and partly because, as she declared, she would not know how to live without her precious, darling John.

In the ordinary way, Sir Arthur James would have been very indignant with any one who dared to oppose his wishes in regard to the treatment he ordered, no matter how expensive it might be; and very likely he would have refused to attend them any longer, or offer them any more advice. But, as John's case was a very rare one indeed, and, if he could find a cure, would bring him world-wide fame, making him the most talked-of doctor from the North Pole to the South Pole, and from China right away round the world to Japan, he at last consented, as a very great favour, to allow John to remain at home, where he would visit him every day at a fee of ten guineas a visit. To which arrangement Mrs. Sparks agreed; whereat Dr. Lomas made a mental note of the fact, and determined to put on another two guineas to his

fee. Indeed, Mrs. Sparks would have found it much cheaper had she allowed John to enter the nursing home in the beginning ; and there are not many mothers who would be willing to pay such enormous sums of money just for the sake of keeping their boys at home. So this shows how extremely unfortunate poor John really was.

"There is no need to worry at all, Mrs. Sparks," said Sir Arthur, as he prepared to leave. "There is very little wrong with your boy really ; and I have perfect confidence in the treatment I shall give him. The child will be perfectly well in a month or two."

All of which shows that Sir Arthur James, although he was a great specialist, could be both right and very wrong at one and the same time. He was right, because, of course, there really was very little the matter with John, who was only very spoilt, very wilful, and very lazy, or else all these terrible things would not have happened to him, and he would not have been plagued by an obstinate little fairy who meant to cure him. But Sir Arthur was quite wrong when he said that John would be well in a month or two, and that it would be his treatment that would cure him. For, as we have seen, Sir Arthur did not

understand John's complaint one little bit. How could he, when he did not believe in fairies? And, as you will learn if you go on reading, John was quite well long before Sir Arthur said he would be, and it was not Sir Arthur who cured him.

"I do hope it will be all right," sighed Mrs. Sparks over a cup of tea, which she was having with Dr. Lomas in the drawing-room after the departure of the specialist. "Sir Arthur seems very confident; but there is no doubt that John is ever so much worse this afternoon. He talked utter nonsense all the time Sir Arthur was with him, just as though he was an idiot. It was terrible to hear him."

"Ah!" said Dr. Lomas, who, from what Sir Arthur had said, thought that John was much better. "Dear me! You don't say so!"

"It made my heart bleed," said Mrs. Sparks.

Dr. Lomas evidently understood what she meant by saying this, for he made no offer to apply his skill in checking the flow of blood from this delicate organ, which could not have been very seriously injured, or surely Mrs. Sparks would have begged for his professional services. As a matter of fact, Dr. Lomas was thinking of other things

than hearts. He had not forgotten that Sir Arthur had made him stay downstairs, instead of asking him to go to the nursery with him to examine John, a little matter which had caused the good doctor some irritation. He was as anxious to study John's case as Sir Arthur was himself.

"The child seems to me little better than an idiot," said Mrs. Sparks.

"You don't say so!" said the doctor again. "Dear me! But tell me exactly, my dear Mrs. Sparks, in what way do you mean that the boy seemed—er—er—mentally deranged?"

"Yesterday it was all stuttering," said John's mother, "and although that seemed only a passing attack, to-day he cannot even talk sense. I only wish his father was back from America!"

"Perhaps this is only another attack to-day," suggested Dr. Lomas. "I wonder if I might see the child myself presently."

"I will send for Miss Walker to take you to the schoolroom," said Mrs. Sparks. "I will not come myself, as I could not bear to see him again like that," and she dropped two tears into her cup of tea, which were so large that they must have made it taste quite salt.

So Miss Walker was sent for, and Dr. Lomas followed her to the nursery.

CHAPTER VII

THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH LESSONS

DR. LOMAS LEARNS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PREPOSITIONS AND CONJUNCTIONS; AND SO DOES JOHN

JOHN was busy with his grammar book, which was open at a page headed ADVERBS, when Dr. Lomas entered the schoolroom. At his own request, Miss Walker closed the door after him, leaving him alone with the boy.

"Ha! what is this?" asked the doctor, picking up the book. "English Grammar? What are you worrying your head over that for? Time enough to learn grammar when you are older."

"I am learning adverbs," said John.

"Adverbs! Bless my soul! Bothered if I can remember what adverbs are myself."

"They modify all parts without speech with nouns and pronouns, and answer from questions how, when, and where," said John.

"Indeed?" said the doctor, staring at him.

"But what are you bothering your head over this stuff for? Much better play with your toys."

"But I had to learn what adverbs are," said John, "because I could not speak properly until I did. Ram-marg said I wouldn't, and I didn't. I had to learn a part without speech every day."

"And who is Ram-marg?" asked Dr. Lomas with growing surprise, putting up his eye-glass.

"Don't you know? He's a fairy who is making me learn my parts without speech. He comes from me every night, and sits under the rail without my bed. But I have told you all that before, only you would not believe me. You said you would catch him and put him out of pickle; but you didn't, for he still comes from my room out the night."

A brilliant idea was slowly dawning in the mind of Dr. Lomas. Such an idea! One that might make him famous, more famous even than Sir Arthur James. And Sir Arthur had not hinted a word of it down in the drawing-room.

"If I don't learn my parts without speech," continued John gravely, "then Ram-marg makes me say silly things behind people, as I did behind Sir Arthur James just now."

Dr. Lomas's idea was growing larger and larger;

and the larger and clearer it grew, the more excited Dr. Lomas began to feel.

"And where does this fairy come from, and what is he like, eh?" he asked.

"I suppose he comes to fairy-land," replied John; "and he's like a slate-pencil without legs and arms. He has a head under his body without a face, and his eyes nearly stand into his head when he is angry. His beard jerks from his chin when he speaks, and he sits behind me under the bed-rail, and squeaks from me into the dark, like a pencil scratching under a slate. He gets awfully angry without me, I can tell you."

Dr. Lomas muttered something about "reflex action" and "reverse processes,"[1] and turned over the pages of the grammar book.

"What was the last thing you learnt?" he asked.

"Adverbs," said John.

"And have you learnt what an adverb is?"

"Of course I have," said John. "I told you just now. Adverbs are parts without speech that modify all other parts without speech with nouns and pronouns, and answer from questions how, when, and where."

[1] Words used by doctors when speaking of the nerves.

"Clever boy!" said Dr. Lomas, trying to conceal how very excited he was feeling. It was really a wonderful discovery he was making. "Now say that all over again."

John repeated it as well as he could, while Dr. Lomas looked intently at the open page before him.

"What comes next?" he asked.

"Prepositions," said John.

"And what is a preposition?"

"A preposition is a part without speech that ——"

"Governs a noun or pronoun," prompted the doctor as John paused.

"I don't know it," said the boy.

"And shows its relation to some other word in the sentence," Dr. Lomas completed.

"Do I speak all right now?" asked John.

"No," answered the doctor.

"Oh, dear!" sighed John. "Do I still say silly things?"

"I should think you do," answered the doctor, who was now feeling really very excited.

"Is it the adverbs?" asked the boy anxiously.

"No! Prepositions. All your prepositions are wrong," cried Dr. Lomas triumphantly.

"Oh, dear!" sighed John again. "Then I suppose I must learn what prepositions are. May I have the book, please?"

Dr. Lomas handed it to him, and watched him as he learnt, thinking all the while how extraordinarily clever he had been to make his discovery, and of all the fame which it would bring him. He, Dr. Lomas, L.R.C.P., M.R.C.S., was on the point of solving a problem which had baffled all the learning and experience of the great Sir Arthur James, Bart., M.D. No wonder he watched John eagerly as he sat poring over[1] the grammar.

Presently John closed the book.

"A preposition," he began, "is a part of speech that governs a noun or pronoun, and shows its relation to some other word in the sentence. Is that right?"

"Yes!" said the doctor eagerly.

"To, with, from, out of; are they prepositions?"

"Yes!" cried Dr. Lomas. "That's right."

"By, except, for, into, in; are they prepositions?"

"Yes! Yes!" cried the doctor. "That's right! That's quite right! You can say them all right now, by Jove!"

[1] Poring over: looking very carefully at.

John's face broke into a smile. "Yes, I know what prepositions are now," he said.

"By Jove! Yes," said the doctor. "Funny thing, eh? Fancy learning them like that, what?"

"But therefore nevertheless notwithstanding," said John.

"Eh?" said the doctor, staring at him.

"How so moreover however indeed; either or, neither nor," said John.

"Conjunctions!" shouted the doctor.

John looked at him in amazement. "Whether or as-a-matter-of-fact by-the-by?" he asked.

"More conjunctions!" screamed the doctor.

"Whether or as-a-matter-of-fact by-the-by?" asked John again.

But Dr. Lomas did not wait to reply. With a great shout of "Eureka!" which means that he wished to tell the whole street that he had found what he had been seeking, he dashed out of the nursery, slammed the door after him, bounded down the stairs, taking them four at a time, and, much to the alarm of Mrs. Sparks, ran round and round the drawing-room, looking for his hat.

"Good gracious me!" cried Mrs. Sparks. "Whatever is the matter?"

"I've got it!" yelled the doctor.

"What? What is it?" gasped Mrs. Sparks, hardly knowing whether she should faint or call for the police.

"My hat!" cried the doctor.

Fully convinced that he had suddenly gone mad, Mrs. Sparks hid herself in the furthest corner of the room and pulled a table in front of her.

"My hat!" cried the doctor again. "Where is my hat?"

"In the hall," answered Mrs. Sparks with difficulty.

Dr. Lomas rushed into the hall, seized his hat from the hat-stand, and, jamming it on to his head, appeared once more at the drawing-room door.

"It's all right, my dear Mrs. Sparks!" he cried. "I've got it! Adverbs! Prepositions! Conjunctions! Under my very nose, my dear madam! Under my very nose!"

And, having frightened Mrs. Sparks out of her very wits, Dr. Lomas rushed off home to tell the whole world what a wonderful discovery he had made, and what a marvellously clever fellow he was to make it.

Meanwhile, fully convinced that Dr. Lomas had gone quite mad, Mrs. Sparks rushed upstairs to see what awful things had happened to her be-

loved John, and fully expecting to find that Dr. Lomas had been cutting him up into little pieces on the nursery table with a penknife. You can imagine her delight at finding him safe, and how she threw her arms round his precious little body.

"And there by-the-by?" said John.

"Darling!" cried his mother. "And are you quite all right?"

"Moreover notwithstanding nevertheless," answered John.

"What did you say, darling?"

"Moreover notwithstanding nevertheless," said John. "But than, or so if."

His mother looked at him in dismay. "Is there anything the matter, darling?" she asked.

"But," said John.

"Can't you speak to me, dear?" asked Mrs. Sparks anxiously.

"And," said John.

But the more she questioned him, the more hopeless did his answers seem; until at last, really afraid that he had gone quite silly, she held a frightened consultation with Miss Walker as to what was the best thing to be done. Eventually they decided that he ought to have perfect rest in a darkened room; and, in spite of many angry

protests in a very curious language, John was carried kicking and struggling to his bedroom, undressed, and put to bed. And there, with drawn blinds, shutting out the sunshine from the room, and deprived of his beloved grammar in which his only hope of salvation lay, John sobbed himself to sleep, while Mrs. Sparks telephoned an urgent message to Sir Arthur James, begging him to come at once.

CHAPTER VIII

JOHN LEARNS THE BIGGEST LESSON OF ALL

A sleeping draught was the only thing that made John go to sleep that night. They made him drink it as soon as it arrived from the chemist, as the result of his mother's frantic telephone message to Sir Arthur James ; and John, too weak from crying, and too miserable to resist, drank it up, made a face, and said, "Nevertheless!"

All that evening and all that night he lay like a log, while Dr. Lomas, with wet towels round his head, was writing away, hour after hour, telling the world all the wonderful things that had happened to John, all about his head, and his brain, and his eyes, and his tongue, and even about his nose, so that the world might the more easily understand what a clever fellow Dr. Lomas was, and what a mighty discovery he had made.

And, strangely enough, in another study inside another house somewhere in Harley Street, which is the one great street in London where all the

doctors who want to be famous live, where all the big men and all the little men have brass plates outside their front doors, which are kept so bright

that the brass plates of the little men shine just as much as the brass plates of the big men, and make them look just as important ; in the study of the house in Harley Street sat Sir Arthur James, doing

just the same thing as Dr. Lomas. Only he had not got a wet towel round his head, and he did not sit writing quite into the small hours of the morning[1] like Dr. Lomas. But then Sir Arthur James was already famous, while Dr. Lomas only hoped to become so by taking a short cut which did not lead through Harley Street ; so that will account for the wet towels and the small hours of the morning. But they were both writing about our young friend John, sleeping the sleep of the drugged in his comfortable bed ; and there are not many boys of eight years of age who can boast of having made two doctors sit up all night, just for the purpose of describing the curious things which have happened to them.

Funnily enough, it was just as Dr. Lomas put down his pen, took off the wet towel from his head, and turned out the electric light thinking it about time he went to bed, that John woke up. What it was that made him wake like that he did not know; but the light of morning was creeping through the blinds of his bedroom, when he suddenly found himself wide awake and sitting bolt upright in bed. And there, perched on the rail

[1] The small hours of the morning: the hours just before daybreak.

at the foot of the bed, with a wide grin running round his funny little face, which made it look as though the whole top of his pencil-like head were about to fall off, was Ram-marg.

"Well? What is a conjunction?" were the first words that the grinning little fairy spoke.

"A part of speech that has no meaning, as a noun or verb or adjective has," answered John.

"Quite right," said Ram-marg. "But what is it for?"

"I suppose it must join words and sentences together," answered John, surprised at his own knowledge. For, of course, he had not been able to learn about conjunctions, because they had taken the book away from him. He only knew from painful experience that, spoken by themselves, they had no sense, and conveyed no meaning to anybody. Therefore they must be used to join words and sentences together, the only thing left for them to do.

"Quite right," said Ram-marg again. "And how did you like it?"

"Not at all," answered John, quite truthfully.

"It is just a week ago to-day since I came to you," said the fairy. "Do you remember that?"

It was not likely that John would forget it,

since he had such good cause for remembering his first terrible experience.

"What have you got to say for yourself now?" asked the little fellow.

John made no reply. Very few people can find an answer to that sort of question.

"Shall I tell you?" asked Ram-marg.

"If you please," said John.

"Well, you are a much nicer boy than you were eight days ago."

John looked at him in surprise, and Ram-marg continued: "You have learnt something, which you never did before. You have learnt your parts of speech, for one thing; and you have learnt that, as long as you did not know anything about them, you only looked a fool. And you did look a fool, too. There; now what have you to say about *me?*"

Again John was silent. He could not very well say what he thought, for by this time he was heartily afraid of the little man, and would not offend him for worlds, as he certainly must if he was to answer him truthfully. And when you cannot say anything nice about a person, it is far better to keep silent. At any rate, it is the wisest thing to do when you are face to face with him;

unless, of course, you happen to be the stronger of the two, when it is quite a simple thing to say what you think. There are some people who declare that you ought never to say behind a person's back what you would not say to his face; and, although that is an excellent rule to follow if you can, I am quite sure that John could not have done so, and that if Ram-marg had not been sitting opposite him on the bed-rail, he would have said some horrible things about him. But, as Ram-marg was there, John said nothing; which, after all, was the best thing he could say.

"Shall I tell you?" asked the fairy presently.

"Very well," he continued, as John still kept silent. "You think that I am a nasty, interfering little beast, who has given you the worst week you ever had in your life; and, if you had your way, you would like to grind me up into powder and push me into all the inkpots so that you could not write any more."

John hung his head and began to feel uneasy.

"Do you know what would happen if you did that?" asked Ram-marg presently, swinging his little legs up and down. "Do you know what would happen if you were able to get rid of me? You would be committing suicide. You would

become an idiot, and then you would commit suicide. As it is, you have nearly been an idiot. So you know what that is like. Well, that's the step just before suicide."

John shivered to think how near to the brink he had been.

"And, now we know what we think of each other, you are going to have your reward," announced the fairy.

John turned pale. Reward! He was to receive a reward for thinking all those nasty things about Ram-marg! What dreadful thing was going to happen next?

"Don't get excited," said the fairy, grinning more than ever at the look on John's face. "You just wait until I have turned upside down and inside out."

So saying, he suddenly cocked his heels up in the air, and the next moment he was standing on his head.

"Now," he said, "shut your eyes and count a hundred, while I turn inside out."

John faithfully did as he was told and, after he had counted one hundred, opened one eye very slowly. Then he opened the other wide in surprise at what he saw. For there, sitting on the

bed-rail where the little man had been but a moment ago, was the daintiest, prettiest little thing John had ever set eyes on. Her thin gossamer dress was trailing over the bed-rail, revealing two of the most perfect little feet imaginable ; her bare arms were raised to lift the waves of fair hair that tumbled about her shoulders ; and from between the waves smiled the most mischievous, winsome, sweetest little face that John had ever seen.

He rubbed his eyes again and again, staring at this wonderful little vision in silence. But she was real enough ; for, crossing one knee over the other, she clasped her hands round it and smiled back at him. And, when she laughed, it was just like the tinkle of those glass things that are sometimes hung up in front of the window for the wind to play with, only it was much more musical and delicate.

"Don't you know me?" she asked.

John was too surprised to answer. He could only sit there and look, and look, and look.

"Don't you see," she explained presently, "that, all the time I was Ram-marg, you only saw me as I seemed to be? I was like a man then, because boys like you always want a man to deal with them. If you had seen me as I really am,

you would have wanted to catch me and stick me to a board with pins, as you do with the butterflies. So I had to make you rather afraid of me, because you simply would not learn, and did not want to know anything about me at all. But when I turned upside down just now, I turned from Ram-marg into Grammar ; and, now that I have turned inside out, you see me as I really am, and no longer as I seem to be to idle boys. And do you know why that is ? "

" No," answered John, thinking how wonderful and dainty and ever so beautiful the little lady looked, and how glad he was that she *had* turned inside out.

" It is because you never see the best of people on the outside," she said. " All that is kind, and beautiful, and nice about them is kept locked up inside, and none of them are really what they seem. They so often look ugly because they will not let what is nice come out ; and it is only when you begin to know them properly that you find how sweet and nice they really might be if only they would. And it is the same with me. Now you understand me better, you find that I am not nearly so nasty as you thought."

" I think you are just wonderful," said John.

"And I am very useful, too," said the dainty little lady, "as you will find out as you grow older. And, if you always keep friends with me, I can help you ever so much."

"How?" asked John.

"As long as you want to know more about me, I shall sit on your shoulder and whisper in your ear whenever you need my help," was the answer.

As you can imagine, the idea of having such a dainty little person to help him whenever he needed help pleased John immensely.

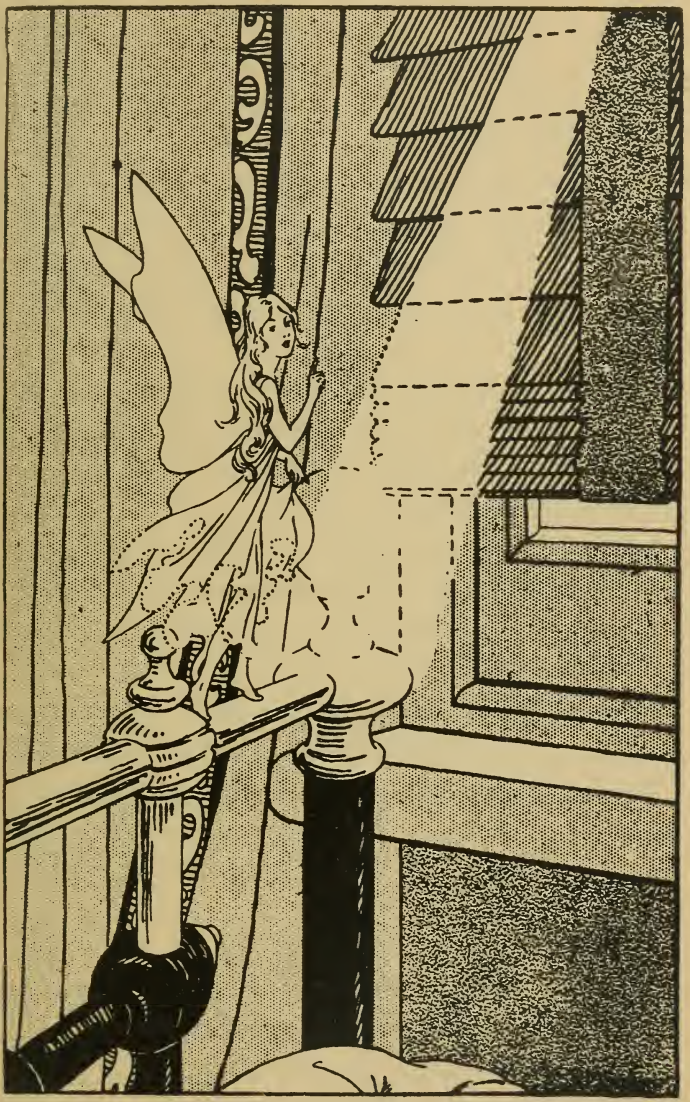
"Is that really true?" he asked.

"Have I told you anything that has not been true?" she asked in return; and John had to admit that he had never been misled since Ram-marg had taken him in hand.

"There is one thing of which I must warn you," continued the fairy in a very serious voice. "If you want me to help you, you must always believe in me. People will say all sorts of things if you tell them about me. They will say that it is all rubbish; that there is no such person as Fairy Grammar, and that it is all imagination. But don't you believe them."

"I'm not going to," said John.

"There are people like those two silly old



"The Fairy stepped on the sunbeam."

doctors—" she was continuing, when suddenly her cheeks dimpled, and she broke into peals of tinkling laughter.

"They said that they were going to pickle me, but you have no idea what a pickle I have ready for them!" And she laughed so much that she had to hold on to the bed-rail to keep herself from falling off.

"What do you mean?" asked John, very curious to know how she was going to effect this wonderful operation, and what the trick was she was about to play on the doctors.

"Never mind now," she answered. "You just wait and watch. Now I must be going, for the sun is quite up, and here is my moving staircase waiting for me."

She pointed to a beam of sunlight that came through a hole in the blind and slanted down to the brass rail of the bed; and, rising to her feet, she picked up her dainty gossamer dress and moved towards it. At the foot of the sunbeam she paused, and turned to John.

"Don't forget the three things I have told you," she said. "Always want to know more about me; always believe in me; never believe in people who say I am not real."

So saying she stepped on the sunbeam, and was carried slowly up the slanting ray of light.

"Good-bye!" she called, as she neared the top; and, kissing her hand to him, she was drawn right through the hole in the blind and disappeared from his sight.

It was not until a long while after that John learnt the nature of the pickle which the mischievous little fairy had prepared for the two doctors. As you have already been told, Sir Arthur James was engaged in writing a wonderful lecture all about the strange behaviour of John, whom, of course, he quite believed that he had cured. But whatever induced Dr. Lomas to do the very same thing I do not know, unless, of course, it was the fairy who made him think of it. But the fact remains that they did both write a wonderful lecture about John, which each finished about the same time, and which each sent to be printed in two different papers which doctors read, without either of them knowing what the other was doing.

As luck would have it, both these lectures appeared in print during the same week. In both were the same particulars about John; but, whereas Sir Arthur James never even mentioned the

name of Dr. Lomas, Dr. Lomas said a great deal about Sir Arthur James. But then Dr. Lomas had a reason for doing that; for he wanted the world to understand that he was far cleverer than Sir Arthur James, since he, Dr. Lomas, had been the one to find out the cause of John's strange behaviour, which Sir Arthur had failed to discover, and therefore that he, Dr. Lomas, had been the one to cure him. Of course, he did not say this in so many words, but he led people to believe that it was so. He said that John's strange behaviour was all due to the fact that, when John's father was a little boy, he had had a heavy knock on the head while he was learning grammar; so that, when John started to learn grammar, his brain refused to act properly and made him stutter at every part of speech until he had learnt it properly. Consequently, by making him learn his grammar as quickly as possible, Dr. Lomas had completely cured John of his trouble. Of course, if Dr. Lomas had known that Sir Arthur James was going to write to the papers about it, he would never have done so too; but he thought that the case was quite an ordinary one in Sir Arthur's opinion, and that the great specialist would never trouble himself about it.

Now, Sir Arthur James was a very great man, and his account of John's funny attack was written as a very great man should write such a thing; that is to say, it was heavy, learned, and profound. He said it was a new disease, which he called by that long name he had made up while he was coming downstairs from his first visit to John. And he explained why he called it by that name; but he did this in such a way that I cannot hope to make you understand it.

Naturally, he was furious when he heard that Dr. Lomas had written about John too; and, being a very big man, he tried to get all the other doctors to say that Dr. Lomas was not fit to be a doctor any longer. In fact, he was so very nasty that he put Dr. Lomas into a very bad temper; so that, instead of saying how sorry he was that he had made a mistake, Dr. Lomas wrote a letter to the papers, saying that it was he, Sir Arthur James, who had made the mistake, and that he was quite wrong about John from beginning to end.

From that day, their friends took up the quarrel. Sir Arthur's pointed out how badly Dr. Lomas had written his lecture, and how many mistakes in grammar he had made; whereupon

the friends of Dr. Lomas began to pull Sir Arthur's lecture to pieces, and showed that it, too, contained mistakes in grammar. And, as this happened to be quite true, it shows that the Fairy Grammar had been up to her tricks with both the doctors, and that this was what she meant when she said that she had a pickle ready for them.

After that, all the other papers joined in the quarrel, not only in England, but all over Europe and America; and some said Dr. Lomas was right, and some said that Sir Arthur was right, with the result that, between them, John became famous all over the world, and had his portrait printed in every illustrated paper everywhere. And, all the while, the real cause of all this tremendous to-do was chuckling and laughing to herself over the merry tricks she had played on those who did not believe that there was such a person or thing as a Fairy Grammar.

But John did; and right away on until he became an old man he kept Fairy Grammar as his friend. And, according to her promise, she sat on his shoulder and whispered in his ear while he was writing, so that in time people began to say how well he wrote and what perfect language he used, and were glad to read everything he

cared to write. In the end he became even more famous than Sir Arthur James or Dr. Lomas, although he had a regular family of names to be called by; and all because, when still quite a little boy, John Henry Arthur Percival Sparks had learnt that there was such a thing as The Fairy Grammar.

APPENDIX

THE PARTS OF SPEECH IN RHYME

1. A Noun names a person, a place, or a thing;
   As: *John*, *Mary*, *London*, *kitten*, *book*, *ring*.
2. A Pronoun's a word that stands for a Noun;
   As: The man was so tired that *I* made *him* sit down.
3. An Adjective usually goes with a Noun;
   As: Mother has got *a pretty new* gown.
4. A Verb is a word that does or that tells;
   As: James *is* a boy; Mr. Jones *buys* and *sells*.
5. An Adverb with Verb or with Adjective goes;
   As: The horse ran *away*; You've a *very* red nose.
6. Prepositions relate Nouns or Pronouns to Verbs:
   Jane gave it *to* me; Donkeys feed *upon* herbs.
7. Conjunctions link Nouns or Clauses together:
   Tom *and* Dick are good friends, *but* they fought on the heather.